

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly rewrite Claims 1-12 as follows, in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121:

1. (Currently amended) An isolated inosine-producing *Bacillus* bacterium ~~which has reduced growth inhibition by 6-ethoxypurine as compared to *Bacillus* 168 Marburg strain and wherein said bacterium is deficient in a gene selected from the group consisting of the *purR*-gene, the *purA*-gene, the *deoD*-gene, and combinations thereof~~ is disrupted, and wherein said bacterium is further modified to be less susceptible to growth inhibition by 6-ethoxypurine in the presence of 2000mg/L of 6-ethoxypurine as compared to a *Bacillus subtilis* strain having the same gene disruption as said inosine-producing *Bacillus* bacterium.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently amended) The *Bacillus* bacterium according to claim 1, wherein said ~~reduced~~ growth inhibition occurs on a solid medium.

5. (Previously presented) The *Bacillus* bacterium according to claim 1, wherein when the bacterium is cultured on a solid medium containing 6-ethoxypurine and a solid medium not containing 6-ethoxypurine, the bacterium shows a relative growth degree of 80 or more, which is defined by the following equation:

Relative growth degree (%) = [colony diameter (mm) observed in the medium containing 6-ethoxypurine]/[colony diameter (mm) observed in the medium not containing 6-ethoxypurine] x 100.

6. (Previously presented) The *Bacillus* bacterium according to claim 5, wherein the solid medium containing 6-ethoxypurine comprises 2000 mg/L of 6-ethoxypurine.

7. (Original) The *Bacillus* bacterium according to claim 6, wherein the solid medium is a minimal medium.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Withdrawn) A method for producing a *Bacillus* bacterium having improved inosine-producing ability, which comprises selecting strains showing favorable

growth in a medium containing 6-ethoxypurine from a population of *Bacillus* bacteria, and selecting a strain showing high inosine-producing ability from the obtained strains.

10. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 9, wherein the population of *Bacillus* bacteria is obtained by subjecting a parent strain belonging to the genus *Bacillus* to a mutagenesis treatment.

11. (Withdrawn) A method for producing inosine, comprising culturing the *Bacillus* bacterium according to claim 1 to a medium to accumulate inosine in the medium and collecting inosine from the medium.

12. (Withdrawn) A method for producing 5'-inosinic acid, comprising culturing the *Bacillus* bacterium according to claim 1 in a medium to accumulate inosine in the medium, adding purine nucleoside phosphorylase, phosphoribosyltransferase, or a combination thereof to the medium containing inosine, and collecting 5'-inosinic acid.